

**Impact of Planning and Building Regulations on the  
Architectural Character of a Cityscape**

**(An examination of the "Special Primary Residential Zone" in CMR)**

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A Dissertation submitted  
for the Degree of Master of Science (Architecture)  
at the University of Moratuwa  
in March, 2005

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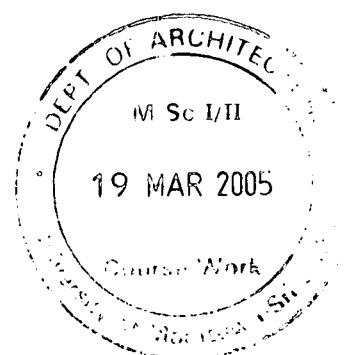
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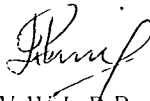
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### DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signed



(W.W.L.P. Rodrigo)



University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.

Signed Supervisor:



(Professor Samitha Manawadu)

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## PREFACE

The city is a dynamic organism. It is a physical entity, a social phenomenon and an economic unit. It is in a continuous state of flux, subject to **socio-cultural, economic, physical and administrative forces**. The city goes through the **cyclical process of origin, growth, decay and rebirth**. Consequently, the **urban environment undergoes corresponding changes, modifying trends of human life and behavior**. Social-economic factors are **not easily susceptible to measurement**. Quite often, they are intangible and imponderable. Nevertheless, socio-economic changes come on so rapidly and with such complexity that it is hardly possible to ignore them. The **growth of the city and the changes in its form and structure** should lead to development of **man-mental, spiritual, material and physical**.

The contemporary city has not been able to fulfill the aspirations of the human society. Man has not been able to live a full and good life in the present urban environment. The city is growing fast; but **has not been able to provide to an adequate extent the necessary physical infrastructure and social overhead**. Then how people can restore order in existing human settlements and create new ones which satisfy his need for living, working, worshipping and recreating?

To overcome this problem, one major solution would be a comprehensive urban development plan (master plan) which serves as guidelines in the development of the city not only for the present but also for the foreseeable future is needed. The master plan is an essentially policy instrument and an effective mean to achieve the desirable goals and objectives. **To effectuate the plan, certain legal, administrative and physical "tools" are necessary. Zoning ordinances, sub-division regulations, building by laws etc. are some of the tools to implement the urban development and redevelopment plans.** Ultimately, the best solution should be the combination of a city's past, present and future as a unit so that the growth of it can be seen and felt as a continuous process.

It has now become accepted and established fact, that a city should possess a strong individual character. It is not a question of goodness or badness of character, but, a question of a city possessing a definite character representing its identity. In this context, maintaining the character of a place is of vital importance for when the character is altered destroyed or removed from a place; the essential bond between the place and its people are subjected to be broken, resulting in a subsequent diminution of the quality of life of its people. It is true; in this situation present statutory regulations too play a major role in determining the character of a place, as it is a tool to maintain various standards related to physical factors of development.

But, the destruction, major alternation or controlling of character would inevitably result in a loss of sense of belonging creating disharmony in the lives of its people. As professionals how can we face this problem is vital important in this situation.



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# **Impact of Planning and Building Regulations on the Architectural Character of a Cityscape**

## **(An Examination of the “Special Primary Residential Zone” In CMR)**

### **Introduction**

#### **Observation and issues**

Rapid urbanization process taking place in the Colombo region make physical planning process a more complex and difficult exercise. **High population density, growing unemployment and the scarcity in housing add to the problems of physical fabric of the Colombo zone. Although the Colombo region is small, considering the total area of the country, it has considerably various in economic, social, cultural and special architectural characters, which give evidence of our past. But due to the above situation maintenance of the architectural character and there by the physical fabric of the region has become a great difficult problem and at the present context it is gradually diminishing from our history.**

When considering the “**Special Primary Residential Zone**” in CMC according to the City of Colombo Development Plan 1999, above situation has become a grater problem. The “Special Primary residential Zone” located in **central part of the Colombo region** and having most of the **historical and architectural buildings of residential, cultural and land marks of past events.** Such as Town-hall building, Independence hall, National archives, Public library, large villas of residential purposes with streetscapes of luxurious groves of trees are some of architectural evidence which reflect the architectural character of the cityscape and also our past. As such, according to the **character zoning, it falls within the prestige residential zone of Colombo region.** According to the prevailing rules and regulations this zone is mainly **for residential development** and it will have **housing units ranging from a single floor to a maximum of three floors including the ground floor.** But **availability of best infrastructure facilities and ancillary facilities and locating in the central part of the Colombo region caused more development projects to attract towards to this zone.** This makes big complexities to maintain the existing historical, cultural and prestige characters of the

physical fabric while catering the demand. In this continuous journey of development necessity of planning for future development has become one of the major important factors. But the developing nature and complexity of society has created more requirements in the built fabric and tend to override the qualitative aspects of architecture. **Analyze and study the impact of rules and regulations on the architectural character of a cityscape would be one important aspect in dealing with designs, as any thoughtless or insensitive creation can ruin the uniqueness of a particular town or city irrevocably.**

### **Need of the study**

From time to time, the growth of cities are subject to other forces which designers tend to consider as major determinants and give priority in designing and within cities. Further it is observed that insensitive way of designing has not only thrown the evolutionary process of city development, but also has created a regrettable sameness among them. Continuation of this would ultimately result in the **'loss of character'** of a cityscape thus pronouncing the death of it. Therefore we must learn from the past, re-examine our design process and being to re-inject the development programs with creative planning. **As such policies and legislative structure should be discussed to bring forward the drawbacks or conflicting situations in development programs of the local context.** Therefore it is undisputed fact that the physical planning plays a major role in the course of development, which bears a greater importance especially in the urban context. But when dealing with these statutory regulations, we can understand impact given by those could not vary according to the required environmental quality of the context. Because of that the statutory regulations as a pre determinant factor might control the built form thereby the architectural character of a cityscape unnecessarily.

Norberg schults in (1980) states, the character is often so strong that it, in fact, determines the basic properties of the environmental images of most people present, making them feel that they experience and belong to the same place. Because time immemorial, man had recognized that each place bears an identity or character of its own. As such the main objective of this dissertation is to identify the **architectural character of the cityscape and analyze how effective of the planning regulations such that to safe guard the past for the future**. Trystan Edwards further says “Design can never be an affair of rules, for it is a philosophical activity which is considered only with principles. A principle has many applications. ... Architects are not complimented if it is assumed that the design of buildings could never be determined by rules. Moreover, there is a practical activity involved, because such rules, if they were really to be a serviceable guide to design, would need to be so numerous that all the liabilities in the world could not hold the volumes in which they were printed” (Edwards, 1926: 21)

## Scope and Limitations of the project



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Laws and regulations which influences on the architectural character of a built form, and thereby the architectural character of a cityscape are in different forms. The Coast Conservation Department, The Airport Authority, is given specific conditions of rules and regulations to over control the built form in specific conditions. Generally the dissertation deals with the planning and building regulations of Colombo Development Plan 1999 by UDA. Among those planning and building regulations, basic regulations which are commonly apply to the design is selected to observe the impact on regulations to the architectural character. Within the area covered by the Colombo Development plan 1999, fall most of the different kinds of buildings with interesting architectural characters worthy of analyzing, a certain areas, however, fell out side the area studying and have therefore omitted. The study is limited to the **“Special Primary Residential Zone” of Colombo region and all the field researches are carried out within this zone.**

## Methods of Study

In order to achieve the above intention this study adopts a **field research method**.

Therefore the case study is to be identified the segments with existing **special architectural characters (types of city character)** within the zone, that is 'sacred or majestic character', 'dynamic or cosmopolitan character' and 'organic or informal character' which is explained in the first chapter. In that senses following segments are to be selected.

### (a) (Majestic character)

<b>Independence avenue</b>	-Architectural character based on historical back ground –
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### (b) (Cultural character)

<b>Ananda Coormarswamy Mawatha</b>	-Architectural character based on cultural usage
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### (c) (Dynamic character)

<b>Horton place</b>	-Architectural character based on high residential usage
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### (d) (Informal character)

<b>Bauddhaloka Mawatha</b>	- Architectural character based on aesthetic (vegetation) way
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Then each of the segment is analyzed and explained how the components of character and contributing factors; that is hierarchy, order, continuity, and variety of activities have influence the architectural character of the cityscape.

After that, each of these segments are analyzed with planning regulations and the building regulations to get a clear idea how these rules and regulation have impacted on contributing the architectural character of the zone.

**In conclusion it is going to discuss the need of these rules and regulations and how they can be modernized and applied so as to avoid monotony and to enhance the architectural character and quality of environment in a city. Thus being architects we must learn from past, re-examine our design process and begin to re-inject the development programs with creative architectural solutions within the frame work of rules and regulations of the country.**

